[Historical Georgia]

RELIGION

mind, had already created the wherewithal to satisfy its credulity—priesthoods which at once lived upon and satisfied "the believer". For the human mind in its pathetic aching for finality, for an attainable perfection, always sets up fetishes, the idealization of hopes and the contrary embodiment of fears—religions and social systems—that encumber it. And this will go on, in religion and in politics, until men realize, as they have been taught by experience, that there is no foreseeable finality; that all will change and that change is the salt of life; that faith rests in themselves; that divinity, untouchable and not to be imagined, rests here around ourselves and lies forward in the spaceless spaces of eternity. And so out of credulity, we have that great corporate body catering for credulity; and like a gigantic and fraudulent insurance upon the divinity of men, it sprawls across the ages —the community of priests. Therefore in approaching the history of Christianity in Georgia we do not seek to inquire when the Georgians became Christians, but when the priesthood in Georgia took over the forms of Christianity.

The Christian religion was introduced into Georgia in the fourth century A.D. under the influence of the Græco-Roman world. The Christian faith, in the pure elements of its early form certainly produced a revolution in the minds of the Georgians of the following centuries. The essential stem of early Christian faith is self-discipline, and in studying the psychology of the Georgians during different epochs, we can appreciate the real values of Christianity in its conversion of the human mind from the irresponsible ingenuousness of the pagan which is exemplified in Xenophon's account of the Mossynoekhoi, to the courageous self-discipline, the conscientious charity and the intellectual poise of the mediæval mind, of which in Georgia Queen Tamara, Sargisi of Tmogvi and King Dmitri II, are the best representative types.

Christianity in Georgia produced its many strong thinkers and its single-minded protagonists of faith. In the sixth century there were the remarkable missions to the Huns undertaken by Aghovanian monks to which reference has already been made. In the seventh century we read of the saintly life and martyrdom of Neophyte, Bishop of Urbnissi, and in the ninth century we find St. Grigoli of Khandzti fulminating from his monastery on the Chorokhi against the matrimonial aberrations of the Kuropalatês Adarnasé.

The Georgian Church went the way of all other churches. The bleak strong spirits built it—and passed into a memory

1: Allen H-4 (no date) 1932 RI1 Georgia RI1

[Medieval Georgia]

including the Cathedral of Mtzkheta, while the Georgian kings assisted the considerable colonies of Georgian monks who settled in the Byzantine territories by the foundation and endowment of churches and monasteries on Mount Athos, at Antioch, Jerusalem, and on Mount Sinai.

The Georgian Church in two respects bears an important relation to the political history of the country. First Christianity, both in Zoroastrian and Mussulman days, represented the influence of Byzantium and the Christian West as opposed to that of Persia and the East. And the prosperity and power of the Church fluctuated according to the respective strength of Christendom and Islam. Secondly Georgia did not experience the struggle between Church and State which was taking place in other parts of Christendom. This fact must be attributed directly to the menace of Islam. The influence of the Church over the peasantry was too valuable to the King, and the armed protection of the King was too important to the Church, to allow either of them to attempt to weaken or dispense with the other. Thus when the Arab invasion drove the Iberian rulers over the Mountains of Likhi, the Catholicos of Mtzkheta followed them, while during the abeyance of the Bagratids, between the seventh and tenth centuries, the Catholicosate apparently lapsed. The revival of the Georgian monarchy saw the reappearance of a Catholicos at Mtzkheta and the rich endowment of churches and monasteries. While Henry II in England was wrangling with Thomas à-Becket, the Georgian kings were showering favours and privileges on their clergy.

During the great days of the Bagratid monarchy, the Georgian Church flourished and grew rich under the protection of and in alliance with the Crown.[1] And it is but rarely that that friction between the two dominant bodies in the state, which was troubling the politics of contemporary England and of the Western Empire, and which, under the Iconoclastic Emperors had arisen in Byzantium, is to be noted in the history of mediæval Georgia. David Aghmashenebeli indeed, carried out a drastic cleansing of the Church, but his conduct is approved by the monkish Annalists. Tamara supported by the nobles tried without success to remove the unpopular Catholicos Mikélo Mirionisdze, who " was generally detested," [2] and both Giorgi IV Lasha and Dmitri II incurred

[1] See particularly Brosset, *H. de la G.*, I, 315–16, for the great acquisitions of property by the Church during the reign of Bagrat IV.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 423.

7:Columbia U. S-4, 5 1956 RHI Caucasia
Georgia RI RHI

NOTE ON THE GEORGIAN CHURCH

C.
G.
795

Christianity spread into Georgia by two routes: into Western Georgia from Greece, and into Eastern Georgia, i.e. ancient Iberia, from Syria and Armenia; this dualism is still apparent in the religious terminology of Georgian. The new religion was opposed not only by indigenous paganism--as everywhere--but also by Zoroastrianism, which was widespread in the Caucasus. According to legend, in the 4th century, the Iberian king Mirian was converted to Christianity by a woman prisoner from Armenia, St. Nino, who is worshipped as Illuminatrix of Georgia. The primate of the Georgian church, who bore the title of Katholikos, was at first subordinated to Antiochia, though ritual and dogma were more closely influenced by the Armenian church. After the council of Chalkedon (451) the Georgians broke with the Monophysite churches of the Orient and attached themselves to Byzantine Orthodoxy; the Armenians remained in the other camp, which led to a long and often politically disastrous feud with the latter. By the 11th century the autocephalous patriarch of the Georgian church, residing in Mtskheta, was completely independent.

C.
G.
779

In Georgian monasteries, including those founded by Georgian monks in Jerusalem, on Mt. Sinai, Mt. Athos and elsewhere, much ecclesiastical literature was translated, and some works are preserved only in the Georgian translation. Original hagiography is considered to begin with

7:Columbia U. S-4, 5 1956 RH1 Caucasia
Georgia RI / RH1

E. G. 779 the life of St. Shushanik († 474). The Georgian text of the gospels as it is used until today in divine worship goes back to a revision after the Greek by the Hagiorite Euthymius († 1028); a copy of an older text shows that the Georgian gospels originally were translated from Armenian and afterwards were revised according to the Greek.

E. G. 795 659 The Georgian Orthodox church, which always represented the influence of Byzance and of the West as opposed to that of Persia and the East, has not known serious conflicts with the State, due to the continuous menace of Islam to both. The autocephaly of the Georgian Church was violated by the Russians in 1810, the office of Katholikos being abolished. It was restored in 1917; since then, the fate of the Georgian church has been the same as that of other religious organizations in the USSR.